

CLAIMS

1. A method of decorating an article, the method comprising mixing a thermochromic ink with a first coating material, applying the mixture onto part or all of a surface of the article, once the mixture is set applying a second coating material onto said surface of the article.
2. A method according to claim 1 wherein the second coating material is transparent.
3. A method according to claim 1 or 2 wherein the second coating material is substantially dishwasher proof.
4. A method according to any of claims 1 to 3 wherein the first coating material is transparent.
5. A method according to any of claims 1 to 4 wherein the first and/or second coating materials comprise lacquers.
6. A method according to claim 5 wherein the first coating material comprises an organic water based lacquer.
7. A method according to claims 5 or 6 wherein the first coating material comprises an acrylic based lacquer.
8. A method according to claim 7 wherein the second coating material comprises a two-part epoxy fortified acrylic resin, including an activator and a thinner.
9. A method according to any of the preceding claims wherein the proportion of ink in the mixture is within the range 5-25%.
10. A method according to any of the preceding claims wherein the mixture

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and/or second coating material are cured following application onto the article.

11. A method according to claim 10 wherein the curing commences with a period in an infra red shortwave drier followed by a heat cure.
12. A method according to claims 10 or 11 wherein the curing includes a heat cure comprising a lower temperature first period, followed by a higher temperature second period.
13. A method according to claim 12 wherein for the mixture, the first period lasts between one and two minutes at 35°C to 65°C, with the second period lasting eight to twelve minutes at 140 to 220°C.
14. A method according to claims 12 or 13 wherein for the second coating the first period lasts between eight and twelve minutes at 35 to 65°C, with the second period lasting twenty five to thirty minutes at 110 to 165°C.
15. A method according to any of the preceding claims wherein a decoration is provided on the article beneath the mixture such that when the thermochromic ink is at least translucent, said decoration is visible.
16. A method according to any of the preceding claims wherein the mixture comprises a plurality of thermochromic inks with different colour change temperatures.
17. A method according to claim 16 wherein the inks are of different colours.
18. A method according to any of the preceding claims wherein the mixture and/or second coating material are applied to the article by spraying.
19. A method according to claim 18 wherein the mixture and/or second coating material are applied to the article by electrostatic spraying.

20. A method according to claim 19 wherein an electrostatic thinner is added to the mixture and/or second coating prior to spraying.

21. A method according to any of claims 18 to 20 wherein the mixture and/or the second coating material are sprayed to a thickness of between 12 and 24 microns.

22. A method of decorating an article, the method being substantially as hereinbefore described.

23. Any novel subject matter or combination including novel subject matter disclosed, whether or not within the scope of or relating to the same invention as any of the preceding claims.

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